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ABSTRACT

Findings resulting from a broad survey of practicing teachers are reported and analyzed in this monograph. The survey instruments were in the form of a questionnaire and selected personal interviews. The reported topics are in the following ten categories: (1) career selection and satisfaction; (2) staff development; (3) discipline problems; (4) student academic difficulties; (5) administrative concerns; (6) parent relations; (7) school finance; (8) job characteristics; (9) characteristics of teaching; and (10) interview findings, summary, and recommendations. (JD)

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THE TEACHER'S WORLD

Special Current Issues Publication No. 9

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FOREWORD

This ninth in the series, Special Current Issues Publications (SCIPs), spotlights an important human relations dimension of the current education scene: classroom teachers' perceptions of their role in the rapidly changing teaching profession. The monograph reports results from a questionnaire survey of nearly a thousand teachers in an urban school system, and makes recommendations for ameliorating the major problems identified.

Some of the findings support widely held notions about what is happening to teachers and their classes; others may surprise readers or contradict common assumptions. Insofar as the study is generalizable, with minor variations, to other populations of teachers across the country, however, both teachers and teacher educators will find it enlightening.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education is grateful to the authors of this monograph--Eveleen Lorton, Jack Coffland, Mary Jo Brazelton, Sara West, and Nancy Kirsner, all of the University of Miami School of Education and Allied Professions--for their contribution. The authors, in turn, wish to acknowledge the assistance and support of the following persons: Lou Kleinman, Dean, and Gilbert Cuevas, Associate Professor--both at the University of Miami School of Education and Allied Professions; Superintendent Johnny Jones, Joseph De Church, Richard Hinds, Cecille Roussell, Everett Abney, Ira Wax, and Thomas Peeler--all with the Dade County Public Schools; and, especially, the classroom teachers who participated in the study.

With this publication, and others in the SCIP series, the Clearinghouse intends to stimulate awareness of significant issues in the preparation and continuing development of education personnel. Readers are encouraged to submit manuscripts on this topic to the Clearinghouse, for possible inclusion in the ERIC system. Comments and suggestions are also welcome.

Lana Pipes, Editor
ERIC Clearinghouse on
Teacher Education

THE TEACHER'S WORLD

The traditional portrait of teachers that has been handed down from generation to generation, with relatively few changes, has come largely from the great number of people who have sat in the classroom on the other side of the teacher's desk, rather than from the personal experiences of classroom teachers. A thorough understanding of what it is to be a classroom teacher in today's world of dramatic changes for the entire teaching profession is essential for those engaged in training new teachers and in providing enrichment and skills updating for experienced teachers. Identification of the real problems of teaching needs to come directly from the teachers.

The School of Education and Allied Professions at the University of Miami undertook a year-long study that addressed major concerns, as perceived by classroom teachers in the Dade County (Florida) Public Schools. The study focused on such questions as: What are the problems facing classroom teachers? What do the teachers themselves say about those problems? What is it like to be a classroom teacher today, in that educational climate?

The study has relevance for the education profession generally because it not only takes a hard look at the state of the art but also lends vision for the times ahead in such matters as teacher accountability and teacher training practices.

Procedures

A comprehensive questionnaire, consisting of 143 specific statements, was mailed to 1126 classroom teachers, representing ten percent of the teaching faculty of every school in the Dade County Public School System. Forty-two teachers, representing four percent of the sample, also participated in personal interviews designed to gather information that could not have been obtained through questionnaire responses alone.

A total of 921 teachers returned the questionnaire. Responses were analyzed by obtaining the frequency of response, the mean response for each item, and the variance of each response set, and by using the chi-square statistic to compare selected variables, with .01 set as the level to determine significance of differences. The interview data

were studied primarily by a form of content analysis and served as supportive data in interpreting overall responses.

The findings of this study are presented in the pages that follow in ten categories:

1. Career Selection and Satisfaction
2. Staff Development
3. Discipline Problems
4. Student Academic Difficulties
5. Administrative Concerns
6. Parent Relations
7. School Finance
8. Job Characteristics
9. Characteristics of Teaching
10. Interview Findings.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS RESPONDING TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE (N = 921)

Number of Years in Teaching	Percent*
1 to 3	8.7
4 to 9	32.5
10 to 14	23.9
15 to 19	13.9
20 to 24	8.7
25 to 29	6.5
30 to 34	4.0
35 to 39	.5
40 or more	1.0

Sex	
Female	69.9
Male	29.8

Age	
20 to 23	5.5
26 to 35	38.5
36 to 45	21.8
46 to 55	23.8
56 or older	9.8

Current Grade Level	
K-3	25.7
4-6	19.2
7-9	24.2
10-12	20.2

Current Position	
Elementary	
Self-Contained Classes	26.2
Pod-Type Classes	10.9
Art, Music, Physical Education	6.7
Exceptional Citizen	7.4
Basic Skills Lab	1.8
Secondary	
Business Education	1.7
Physical Education	4.2
Industrial Arts/ Vocational	6.9
Music, Art	2.8
Exceptional Citizen	3.1
Basic Skills Lab	2.6
Language Arts	9.1
Social Studies	6.0
Sciences	3.9
Foreign Languages	1.2
Mathematics	6.3
Other	16.7

*Where percentages do not total 100%, the discrepancy represents omitted responses.

Ethnic/Cultural Background	Percent
Black	24.1
Caucasian	65.1
Hispanic	9.6
Oriental	.2
Native American Indian	.1

Ethnicity of Students	
Predominantly Hispanic	22.3
Predominantly Black	22.6
Predominantly Caucasian	29.8
Equal: H, B, and C	10.7
Equal: H and B	3.5
Equal: B and C	1.7
Equal: H and C	7.6

Socioeconomic School Status	
High	7.7
Middle	52.2
Low	37.0

Highest Academic Degree	
Bachelor's	50.1
Master's	43.5
Specialist	2.6
Doctorate	1.7

Ability Level of Students	
High	4.0
Middle	10.6
Low	19.7
H, M, and L	31.7
H and M	5.5
H and L	2.0
M and L	25.4

Age of Building (Years)	
1 to 3	10.1
4 to 9	9.7
10 to 15	15.6
16 to 20	22.0
21 or older	39.8

Physical Condition of Building	
Well kept/attractive	38.5
Moderately well kept	51.8
Poorly kept	8.7

Years at Present School	
1 to 3	30.5
4 to 9	45.8
10 to 15	13.9
16 or more	9.0

1. CAREER SELECTION AND SATISFACTION

Five questions dealt with the individual teacher's decision to become a teacher and the degree of satisfaction with that decision.

The first of these questions considered reasons for becoming a teacher. The three reasons that received the highest number of responses were (in order): "a desire to work with young people," "opportunity for rendering an important service," and "interest in subject matter." It is evident from the table, however, that the third item was the choice of secondary school teachers, not of elementary school teachers. Items not selected by a large number of respondents included: "employment security," "financial rewards," "interest in creativity," and "status." It is interesting to note that not a single respondent selected "status" as a reason for entering the teaching profession.

Another question focused on job satisfaction. A majority of the teachers indicated satisfaction with their careers: 64% stated that they are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their career choice. Also noteworthy, however, is the fact that 19.2% said they are dissatisfied. This question included a neutral category, so no one was forced into a negative reaction.

In describing the major influence that led them into teaching, the largest number of the teachers selected "always wanted to be a teacher and nothing but a teacher." The next most popular response was almost the exact opposite: "teaching was an accidental occupational choice, dictated by the circumstances." All other options were selected by only a small number of respondents.

Two questions addressed possible future occupational plans. Asked about future plans in the field of education, nearly half (47.3%) of the respondents said they plan to remain in the classroom. Other popular choices included becoming an administrator (12.9%), going into

Teachers "tell it like it is."

PROFILE OF TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

	%
Grade Level	
K - 3	25.7
4 - 6	19.2
7 - 9	24.2
10 - 12	20.2
Sex	
Female	69.9
Male	29.8
No. Years Teaching	
1 - 3	8.7
4 - 9	32.5
10 - 14	23.9
15 - 19	13.9
20 - 24	8.7
25 - 29	6.5
30 - 34	4.0
35 - 39	.5
40 - more	1.0

REASON TO BE TEACHER

Grade Level	Work with young people (%)
K - 3	69.8
4 - 6	57.8
7 - 9	33.8
10 - 12	46.7

	Render an important service (%)
K - 3	18.0
4 - 6	22.9
7 - 9	25.8
10 - 12	19.2

	Interest in subject matter (%)
K - 3	1.8
4 - 6	4.2
7 - 9	22.2
10 - 12	21.0

college teaching (9.9%), and becoming a counselor (7.2%). When asked if they consider a change in occupation likely, 14.8% of those responding indicated they are "very likely" to change jobs, and 20.7% that they are "moderately likely" to change. Evidently, a large number of people teaching in the classroom would like to change their occupation.

2. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Interest in Various Training Possibilities

Among various methods of self-improvement, the teachers saw class visitations as the most beneficial procedure. The table lists the modes of training in rank order. The mean scores for all items show that teachers viewed all of the possibilities as having at least "some value."

In the cross-tabulations, several minor variances occurred. The elementary teachers were more positive about visiting other classrooms and about being able to have inservice programs than were the secondary teachers. Interest in university courses did not vary with level of teaching, but it did vary with the age of the teachers: older teachers did not rank university courses as highly as did younger teachers.

Similarly, ratings of university independent study and traditional systems of observation and conferences varied with the teachers' "ethnic/cultural background." Hispanic teachers were more interested in university independent study, Caucasian teachers less so. Traditional observation and conferences were most popular with Black teachers and least popular with Caucasian teachers.

For the most part, however, there were few differences among the subgroups of the sample. This general agreement would seem to indicate that the majority of teachers are interested in the same possibilities for inservice training.

TEACHERS INDICATING HIGH INTEREST IN TRAINING POSSIBILITIES

	%
1 Visit other classrooms	49.3
2 Inservice programs	40.0
3 University courses	37.4
4 Self-directed study	35.9
5 Peer consultation	33.2
6 Individual study at university	21.9
7 Traditional observe/ conference system	14.5
8 Weekend workshops	11.4

Importance of Additional Training

Teachers were asked what areas they felt would be important for additional training. From a list of eight items, they were to choose the three that they felt are most important. "Motivating students" and "techniques for varying teaching procedures" ranked first and

TEACHERS SELECTING EACH TRAINING AREA AS AN IMPORTANT NEED

	%
1 Motivating students	57.5
2 Varying teaching procedures	46.1
3 Individualizing instruction	37.1
4 Additional subject matter information	34.0
5 Behavior modification	31.9
6 Classroom management	31.7
7 Assistance with mainstreaming	13.0
8 Planning help	6.6

second respectively. The table gives the percentage of teachers choosing each item.

For this question, no cross-tabulations were made between responses of various subgroups of the sample.

Interest in Methods of Teacher Improvement

Teachers had four choices, ranging from "strongly support" to "entirely against," in responding to the item, "Much has been said recently (news media, etc.) about improving teacher performance; to what extent do you support the following?" Teachers preferred such requirements as (a) additional course work, (b) periodic review and evaluation by administrators, (c) peer supervision, and (d) periodic evaluation of tenured teachers. They responded negatively to requiring a competency test for teachers.

Additional course work to maintain certification received more support from females than from males, more from teachers rating themselves as "outstanding" than from those rating themselves as "good" teachers, and more from Blacks than from Caucasians or Hispanics.

The support given periodic review and evaluation by school administrators was representative of all the groups for whom cross-tabulations were performed. There were no significant differences between subgroups of the sample.

Teacher competency tests were supported more by Caucasian than by Black or Hispanic teachers, more by teachers rating their own effectiveness as outstanding than by those self-rated as less effective, and more by senior high school teachers than by other teachers. It should be remembered, however, that most groups did not favor such tests.

Periodic evaluation of tenured teachers was favored more by females than by males, more by teachers with fewer years of teaching than by those with longer experience, and more by Caucasian than by Black or Hispanic teachers.

TEACHERS AGREEING WITH REQUIREMENTS	%
1 Additional coursework for certification renewal	71.5
2 Periodic review and evaluation of teachers	62.2
3 Periodic review of tenure	47.9
4 Peer evaluation by teacher	43.2
5 Taking of a competency test	27.0

3. DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

General Causes

The overall percentage of the teachers agreeing strongly that the items listed are causes of discipline problems was rather low; evidently, most of the teachers felt that only "some" of their discipline problems result from such causes. Either these areas are not seen as "major" causes of discipline problems, or there are no "major" causes of discipline problems.

As can be seen in the table, those items receiving the highest percentages of agreement were that students "don't value an education" and that they "don't complete assignments." The items receiving the lowest agreement scores are also interesting; the teachers obviously do not believe their students misbehave because they are "bored" or "not challenged." The percentages of teachers agreeing with these two items were very low.

The cross-tabulations show several variations between subgroups of the sample. For example, the teachers who primarily teach Black students related more problems with students who do not complete assignments than did teachers of Caucasian or Hispanic students. Teachers who work with classes primarily made up of Black and Hispanic or Black and Caucasian students reported more problems from students who are reinforced by negative parental attitudes toward education. Teachers who primarily teach Caucasian students felt less often that their problems stem from students who do not value an education than did teachers who work with Black and Hispanic students.

Teachers in schools serving primarily a low socioeconomic status group, or teachers in schools perceived as being "poorly maintained," were much more likely to state that students do not complete assignments and that students are often reinforced at home by a negative attitude toward school.

TEACHERS SAYING THAT "MANY" OR "MOST" OF THEIR DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS STEM FROM STUDENTS WHO:

	%
1 Don't value an education	38.2
2 Don't complete assignments	34.7
3 Don't want to attend school	26.6
4 Have parents with negative attitudes toward school	26.3
5 Are bright but do not achieve	19.0
6 Are bored	9.2
7 Are not challenged at school	3.8

The percentage of teachers who reported problems with students "who do not want to be in school" and "who are disinterested in school work" steadily increased with grade level. The other problems listed, however, increased by grade level only through the junior high school age group; the percentages then dropped for teachers of senior high school students. Basic skills teachers at all grade levels reported higher frequencies for all problems than did other teachers.

Also interesting was the fact that the teachers who rated themselves as "outstanding" consistently reported fewer problems related to these conditions than did teachers rating themselves as "very good" or "good."

Substance Abuse

Two questions dealt with students' use of drugs and/or alcohol. Teachers first were to indicate the extent to which drug/alcohol use is a serious problem in their classrooms; and second, to describe the effect that such use has on certain classroom conditions, such as attendance, behavior, achievement, and attitude toward learning.

Judging from teacher responses to the first question, the use of drugs and/or alcohol is not seen as a major problem. Only 7% of those responding said these substances present a problem in their classroom to any great degree; another 9.9% that they present slight problems. While any agreement with this statement is too high, the findings are not what might be expected from reading the popular press.

Similarly, teachers indicated that drugs/alcohol do not seem to have a major effect on attendance, behavior, achievement, or attitude. Again, the percentage believing they have a major impact in each case was relatively small.

Few significant differences were found when responses of various subgroups of the sample were compared, but there were some that merit consideration. First, as might be expected,

"STUDENT USE OF DRUGS/ALCOHOL IS A SEVERE PROBLEM IN MY CLASS"

	%
Strongly agree	3.0
Agree	4.0
Slightly agree	9.9
Neutral	9.3
Slightly disagree	3.6
Disagree	25.2
Strongly disagree	45.0

TEACHERS SAYING THAT DRUGS/ALCOHOL CAUSE MANY PROBLEMS IN:

	%
Attitude	14.5
Achievement	12.5
Attendance	8.6
Behavior	8.3

teachers in higher grade levels reported a greater problem with drugs/alcohol than did teachers of younger children. Second, several subgroups did indicate that drugs/alcohol are a great problem. Among these were elementary school basic skills teachers, secondary physical education teachers, and fine arts teachers. Do these particular teachers see more students with drug/alcohol problems? Or are they simply more aware of the problems?

Teacher Abuse

Other questions dealing with discipline problems focused on student abuse of teachers: "Have you been physically or verbally abused?" "Do you know someone in this school who has been physically or verbally abused?"

The majority of the teachers indicated that they have been neither verbally nor physically abused. However, nearly 75% said that they know someone who has been verbally abused, and 35% that they know someone who has been physically abused. It would seem this particular issue is more smoke than fire; apparently, everyone has heard about such abuse, but it has happened only to the few. As with the use of drugs or alcohol, however, any verbal or physical abuse is deplorable.

Two noteworthy cross-tabulation variations concern the ethnic/cultural groups of students and teachers. First, teachers of minority groups were more likely to state that they have been abused and that they know of other victims. Teachers of Blacks only, or of Black and Hispanic students, reported such findings. Among teachers working with other various combinations of integrated classrooms, however, the percent reporting abuse was lower. Second, Caucasian teachers were much more likely to report personal abuse or knowledge of abuse than were either Hispanic or Black teachers.

Teachers also differed in their responses according to the ability level of the students being taught. Generally, as the ability level

TEACHERS AGREEING THAT:	%
I might be:	
Verbally abused	35.9
Physically abused	12.2
I know others who were:	
Verbally abused	71.5
Physically abused	34.0

TEACHERS, TEACHING VARIOUS RACIAL/ CULTURAL GROUPS, AGREEING THAT:	%
I might be verbally abused:	
Hispanics	28.8
Blacks	45.5
Caucasian	33.3
I might be physically abused:	
Hispanics	9.2
Blacks	18.1
Caucasian	9.3
I know others who were verbally abused:	
Hispanics	68.0
Blacks	79.9
Caucasian	70.5
I know others who were physically abused:	
Hispanics	29.0
Blacks	51.0
Caucasian	27.9

of the students decreased, the amount of verbal and physical abuse reported increased. This variation was also true for the socioeconomic status of the school: as the school's socio-economic status went down, the level of abuse reported went up.

Finally, teachers who indicated the greater willingness to leave the teaching profession also reported a greater amount of abuse. Those who said they "never" wished to leave teaching reported lower amounts of both verbal and physical abuse than did those professing a "strong" desire to leave teaching.

4. STUDENT ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

The teachers rated the degree to which their classroom problems stem from various types of academic problems. The table shows the percentages of teachers who agreed that their classroom problems stem from each of the causes listed.

The respondents perceived a lack of mastery of the basic skills as a major cause of the problems they face in the classroom. "The wide range of academic abilities found in the class" and students "who cannot read," also high on the list of important causes, are related to problems with basic skills. It would appear, then, that the greatest number of problems occur as a direct result of students' lack of basic skills.

Students "whose academic ability is too low for them to succeed in their classes" were a greater problem to teachers than those whose ability was "too high to be challenged," but only a few teachers indicated that either of these was a problem. At the elementary school level, low-ability students were seen as a greater problem by self-contained classroom teachers than by teachers who teach in open-space classrooms. At the secondary school level, low-ability students were a greater problem for social studies and mathematics teachers than for other subject area teachers.

Black teachers were more likely to state that their teaching problems are not related to low academic ability, while Hispanics were twice as likely as Caucasian teachers to say that low-ability students cause problems.

Teachers working at low socioeconomic status schools were also much more likely to relate their problems to low academic ability. Similarly, teachers in "poorly maintained facilities" more frequently noted problems with students of low academic ability.

Several subgroups of the sample said that students with "an inadequate command of the English language" cause problems.

TEACHERS AGREEING THAT PROBLEMS IN CLASS STEM FROM STUDENTS WHO:	%
1 Have not mastered basic skills	81.5
2 Are in classes with a wide range of achievement	73.1
3 Need help of specialists	67.0
4 Cannot read effectively	65.2
5 Are of very low academic ability	45.2
6 Speak English inadequately	34.0
7 Are not challenged	9.1

Interestingly, Hispanic teachers were more likely to criticize the students' English than were Black or Caucasian teachers. Language arts teachers also said that their problems often stem from a child's inadequate English. Primary teachers more frequently said that English presents problems than did intermediate, junior high, or senior high school teachers.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

Basically, the teachers' responses to questions about administrative relations were positive. While there were always negative opinions, it could be said that the majority of the teachers viewed their administrators positively.

One question, dealing with the amount of planning time teachers have, received a generally negative response. Since the planning period had been removed from the secondary school teacher's day at the beginning of the school year in which the study was conducted, this finding was hardly a surprising one.

The cross-tabulations of responses between particular subgroups of the sample yielded interesting variations in response patterns. For example, only secondary school teachers had objected to the lack of planning time. The majority of elementary school teachers (who had not lost their planning period) felt planning time was adequate.

Teachers who said their building is "poorly maintained" were the most negative about administrative concerns. Significant differences in opinion were obtained for every question; in each instance the teacher who perceived the building as poorly maintained also felt that he/she receives less support from the administration, is evaluated less fairly, or receives less than adequate planning time. Comparing the two tables shows that, among teachers who felt their building is poorly maintained, the percentage agreeing with each statement was smaller in every instance than for the entire population of respondents.

Another noteworthy finding was that the teachers of minority groups were less likely to believe they are evaluated fairly than were teachers of Caucasian students. Evidently, the teachers do not feel that their skills are as evident when working with such a population.

Finally, teachers who said they would like to leave teaching responded negatively for

"The teachers responded favorably about their administrators. . . ."

TEACHERS AGREEING THAT:	%
1 I am free to set my own goals	85.2
2 My discipline is supported	82.3
3 Administrators support me	73.7
4 I am fairly evaluated	72.6
5 I support basic skill demands	70.2
6 I have adequate planning time	36.7

TEACHERS IN "POORLY MAINTAINED FACILITIES" WHO AGREE THAT:	%
1 I am free to set my own goals	76.7
2 My discipline is supported	73.3
3 I am fairly evaluated	61.4
4 I support basic skill demands	55.3
5 Administrators support me	50.7
6 I have adequate planning time	32.5

several items concerning school administration. They were more likely to report that they receive less administrative support; to feel that the evaluation process is unfair; and to state that demands for improved basic skill are unfair.

6. PARENT RELATIONS

Parent/School Relations

Generally, it might be said that the teachers were not overly enthusiastic about their relations with parents. Of the five questions on this topic, none elicited more than 141 "strongly agree" responses from the 921 respondents. At best, teachers were lukewarm in their responses; on some questions the majority were negative.

Two items--"parents support what I do" and "parents attend when I desire a conference"--received overall positive responses. Responses were negative for "parents assist their children with homework," "parents work to promote school projects," and "the home environment of my students is conducive to learning."

The most important findings were obtained when the cross-tabulations were made between these responses and the demographic data. Cross-tabulations for three variables yielded significant differences in opinions for every question in this section.

Teachers of low-ability students were always negative in their responses about parents, while teachers of high-ability students were positive. For example, 91% of the teachers of high-ability students agreed that the student's home environment is conducive to learning; 89% of the teachers of low-ability students disagreed with the statement. Apparently, teachers of low-ability students place a great deal of the responsibility on the parents.

Teachers working in what they felt were "poorly maintained facilities" were also more often critical of parents. For every question, individuals teaching in well maintained facilities were more likely to respond positively about parents than were those teaching in poorly maintained facilities.

Finally, when respondents were subdivided by the variable "ethnic/cultural background of

MEAN RESPONSES FOR STATEMENTS DEALING WITH SCHOOL/PARENT RELATIONS

Parents support teachers	2.0
Parents attend conferences	2.2
Parents promote school projects	2.7
Parents assist with homework	2.8
Home environment is conducive to learning	2.8

(On a 4-point scale, where 1 is positive and 4 is negative)

TEACHERS OF DIFFERENT STUDENT ABILITY GROUPS AGREEING THAT:

	%
Home environment is conducive to learning:	
High-ability students	91.6
Low-ability students	11.1
Parents help child with homework:	
High-ability students	80.2
Low-ability students	20.9
Parents promote school projects:	
High-ability students	72.2
Low-ability students	23.4

the students," teachers of Caucasian students were consistently more positive about parents than were teachers of Black and Hispanic students.

Parent/Teacher Contacts

A second section about parent/teacher relations considered the reasons for parent/teacher conferences. The table ranks the eight reasons listed for such contacts.

Overall, negative reasons for parent/teacher contacts ranked lowest. Contacts related to the student were the most highly rated; unfortunately, the second ranked item dealt with a negative topic, disruptive behavior.

In the cross-tabulations, teachers who were older, who had more experience, or who had taught at the building longer were more likely to report satisfaction with parent relations than were teachers who were younger, inexperienced, or new to a building. The younger or less experienced teacher was more likely to have parent contacts for negative reasons. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than Caucasian teachers to say that parents support the school, and less likely to state that parents come to criticize their work.

Elementary teachers indicated that they have parent contacts for positive reasons; secondary teachers were more likely to say that parents come in to criticize the school or the teacher. A general pattern emerged: parent contacts for such purposes as supporting the school, expressing satisfaction with the program, or discussing the student's academic achievement decreased as the age of the student increased. Primary teachers reported more such contacts than did intermediate teachers, intermediate teachers more than junior high school teachers, and junior high school teachers more than senior high school teachers.

The pattern was different, however, when disruptive behavior was compared to the age of

REASONS FOR PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES (RANK ORDER BY MEAN SCORES)

1 Child's achievement
2 Child's disruptive behavior
3 Child's well-being
4 Support of teacher
5 Express satisfaction
6 Support school
7 Criticize school
8 Criticize teacher

the student. Teachers in the intermediate and junior high school grades reported more conferences with parents because of the student's disruptive behavior. Evidently, such behavior peaks during these years.

Finally, the teachers reporting that they desire to leave the teaching profession were much more likely to say that they do not have positive contacts with parents than were teachers who do not want to leave teaching.

Two additional questions were asked: the number of teacher/parent contacts during the year and who initiated conferences. Generally, teachers reported that they initiate the majority of contacts, and most reported they average one conference a month or less.

"Teachers indicate they initiate the majority of parent/ teacher contacts."

NUMBER OF PARENT/ TEACHER CONFERENCES	%
Only at school meetings	10.5
One or two a year	31.6
One a month	30.7
One a week	13.1
More often	6.5

7. SCHOOL FINANCE

Suggestions for Additional Spending

The teachers were asked to rate items for which they would spend extra money if it were available. On a seven-point scale (where 1 = of greatest importance, 4 = of some importance, and 7 = of no importance), the lowest mean score was 4.02, for spending additional money on administrative salaries. Evidently, the teachers felt that all areas were worth some consideration.

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the table is that teachers did not rank a salary increase as the number one item; two instructional concerns placed higher in the rankings. This finding would seem to indicate that a good number of teachers continue to be concerned with the quality of classroom experiences, not just the paycheck they receive for doing the job. Also, the highest rated items dealt with improving classroom performance; four of the top five priorities were for giving teachers additional assistance in the performance of their teaching duties.

When the scores were broken down by various subgroups, several interesting comparisons occurred. Younger teachers were more likely than older teachers to favor pay raises, teacher aides, and university course work; on the other hand, older teachers were more likely to favor increasing the amount spent on building maintenance.

Men were more likely than women to favor salary increases; women preferred that additional monies be spent for items that would give them assistance in the classroom: teacher aides, remedial instruction, and professional growth activities.

Elementary school teachers were also more likely to favor spending additional monies on aides, remedial instruction, counselors, and school psychologists than were secondary school teachers. Secondary teachers preferred

PRIORITIES FOR SPENDING ADDITIONAL MONIES (RANK ORDER BY MEAN SCORES)

1 Remedial instruction
2 Instructional materials
3 Teacher salaries
4 Teacher aides
5 School psychologists
6 Building maintenance
7 Counselors
8 Professional growth
9 University courses
10 Administrator salaries

"Men were more likely than women to favor salary increases. . . ."

"Elementary teachers favored spending additional monies on teacher aides more than did secondary teachers."

increased salaries and additional university course work.

Personal Improvement

Another section dealing with school finances asked in what areas additional monies might be spent to benefit the classroom teacher directly. The table shows the average rankings of the seven statements listed.

Smaller class size was of primary importance to teachers; it ranked well above the second most popular item, teacher salary increases. The next three items ranked fairly closely to salaries, while the final two items were rated much lower by respondents.

Cross-tabulation of the results did not yield a great number of significant variances from the overall responses. The two most important differences between subgroups came from the variables of sex of respondent and age group taught; these were related, since more female elementary teachers and more male secondary teachers responded to the questionnaire. Generally, women rated a salary increase lower than men did; while men assigned a lower value to the reduction of class size. While sabbatical leave did not receive a high ranking by either group, men rated it higher than women did.

Similarly, secondary teachers rated the need for a salary increase higher than did elementary teachers, especially primary grade teachers. Elementary teachers were much more likely than secondary teachers to rate a class size reduction highly. The removal of disruptive students from class was rated most highly by junior high school teachers; elementary teachers ranked it lower, and senior high teachers ranked this item lowest of all.

Teachers with little experience or younger teachers were more likely to rate highly visitations to other classrooms. On the other hand, older teachers generally ranked the need for increased materials higher. Finally,

TEACHERS' RANKINGS OF BUDGETARY PRIORITIES THAT WILL DIRECTLY AID CLASSROOM TEACHERS

1 Reduce class size
2 Increase salaries
3 Provide adequate materials
4 Remove disruptive students
5 Increase planning time
6 Support visits to other classes
7 Support sabbatical leaves

TEACHERS RANKING ITEM FIRST OR SECOND	%
Increase salary:	
Men	63.8
Women	38.1
Reduce class size:	
Men	57.9
Women	71.8
Sabbaticals:	
Men	25.1
Women	16.3

TEACHERS RANKING NEED FOR ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FIRST OR SECOND	%
Most experienced teachers	60
Least experienced teachers	38

teachers with a great deal of experience rated the need for sabbatical leave higher. Black teachers also rated sabbatical leave higher than did Hispanic or Caucasian teachers.

In conclusion, then, we find that financial improvements are most often sought for betterment of classroom conditions. Such items as class size and additional materials were considered as important as, or even more important than, salaries by the majority of respondents.

8. JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Personal View of Teaching

Teachers were asked to respond to six statements describing the nature of their own job. They were also given a chance to list characteristics in an open-ended question; few people responded to that invitation.

In general, teachers reported that they view the teaching job as one requiring creativity; and that while teaching is challenging on the one hand, it is also physically exhausting.

Teachers in grades K-3 were more likely to perceive their jobs as challenging than were teachers at the other grade levels. Also, teachers who rated their own effectiveness as outstanding considered teaching more challenging than did those who rated themselves lower.

Physical exhaustion seems to be experienced more by secondary teachers than by elementary teachers, and more by the teachers who also reported that they are likely to leave the teaching profession within the next five years.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, having to deal with disruptive students was less characteristic of the secondary teachers than of the elementary teachers. Teachers in grades K-3 reported greater frequency of disruptive students than did intermediate teachers, and junior high teachers reported the greatest frequency of all. These data suggest that physical exhaustion is related to something other than dealing with disruptive students.

TEACHERS AGREEING THAT:	%
Teaching requires creativity	83.6
Teaching challenges me	71.2
I am physically exhausted after teaching a day	57.1
I deal with disruptive students	44.4
I have "out of class" duties	34.4
Teaching is routine	27.4

TEACHERS, SUBDIVIDED BY SELF-RANKINGS OF TEACHING ABILITY, AGREEING THAT:	%
Teaching requires creativity:	
"Outstanding"	92.1
"Very good"	84.3
"Good"	72.9
Teaching challenges me:	
"Outstanding"	80.4
"Very good"	71.4
"Good"	60.6

9. CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHING

School-Wide Characteristics

Six questions addressed general characteristics of the job. For each question, respondents first indicated what is actually occurring at the school, then what they felt is "needed." Comparison of the two tables shows the differences between their perceptions of the "actual" and "needed" situations.

One significant result from the cross-tabulations should be discussed: there were no significant differences in opinion for teachers' perceptions of what was needed. Evidently, all the subgroups of teachers agreed in their perceptions of what should be done.

However, there were several instances in which subgroups varied in their opinions of "actual" characteristics of their job. For example, feelings of job security seemed to increase with the age and experience of the respondent. It is interesting to note, however, that only in the most experienced group did 50% of the teachers choose one of the first two responses of the seven-point Likert scale, indicating a high level of agreement that they have job security.

The elementary teachers felt more job security than did the secondary teachers. Both groups were much more likely to rate their jobs as secure than were elementary specialists, such as art, music, or physical education teachers.

Elementary teachers also more frequently reported support from their administrator than did secondary teachers. In addition, teachers who reported that their building is poorly maintained were much more likely to complain about administrative support than were teachers working in "well maintained" buildings.

Differences were also found for the item, "faculty members share ideas." Teachers whose students were of high socioeconomic status more often said the faculty shares ideas than did

MEAN SCORE FOR PERCEPTIONS OF "ACTUAL" SITUATION	
Administration supports me	2.8
I have job security	3.2
Faculty members share ideas	3.3
Administration supports good teaching	3.5
Faculty is committed to school	3.8
Faculty has social gatherings	4.6

(On a 7-point scale, where 1 is acceptable and 7 is not acceptable)

MEAN SCORE FOR PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT IS "NEEDED"	
Administration supports me	1.8
I have job security	1.8
Faculty members share ideas	1.9
Administration supports good teaching	1.9
Faculty is committed to school	1.9
Faculty has social gatherings	3.7

(On a 7-point scale, where 1 is acceptable and 7 is not acceptable)

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT	%
Well maintained building	58.1
Average maintenance	44.4
Poorly maintained building	33.3

teachers of low socioeconomic groups. Teachers with advanced degrees as well as those with more experience also were less likely to report such exchange of ideas.

Finally, elementary teachers more often reported that the faculty is "committed to the school," while teachers working in what they perceive as "poorly maintained facilities" were less likely to report such commitment.

10. INTERVIEW FINDINGS

42 teachers interviewed

Forty-two teachers participated in a personal interview--a total of approximately 300 interview hours. The interview schedule consisted of 52 questions related to the questionnaire items, and encouraged open-ended responses.

"WHAT ARE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THE CLASSROOM TEACHER TODAY?"

	No. Times Highest Rating Selected
Class size	10
Discipline	10
Required administrivia	6
Apathetic students	4
Six-period day	3
Lack of parental support	3
Lack of materials	2
Job insecurity	1
Lack of teacher aides	1
Social promotion	1
Poor public image	1

The overwhelming feeling expressed during the interviews was one of increasing pessimism. It was apparent that there is pervasive low morale among the teachers. They feel a lack of support from both parents and the administration; they said that (a) parents do not understand, nor do they care, about what teachers are trying to do for their children, and that (b) the administration has failed to support the teachers in many ways, especially in matters of discipline. They expressed a sense of personal powerlessness.

"I know I'll have a job, but many teachers in our school don't know where they'll be next year. I've actually seen them crying."

Finance or salary was seldom mentioned as the major contributor to the low morale, stress, and gloom. Rather, such words as support, respect, cooperation, and a feeling of trust from administrators were mentioned as necessary to the improvement of their situation. While salaries were considered totally inadequate, the real problem was seen as loss of respect from parents and administrators.

Class size is a significant concern of teachers. When asked to identify major problems or to suggest how monies could be used most effectively, teachers first mentioned the need to reduce class size. Other problems identified were lack of instructional materials and inadequacy of teacher salaries.

"It's shameful to think that an organization that deals in human beings has no understanding of teachers' needs or what helps them to be more effective in their jobs."

The teachers were asked, "What do you think should be done to improve the quality of teaching performance in Dade County?" Almost half (48%) gave "other-directed" responses; that is, they felt improvement of teaching is dependent on efficient administration, eager learners, supportive parents, and other outside factors rather than on themselves. Approximately 38% of the respondents referred to the existing

teacher evaluation policies, which they perceived as ineffective and accomplishing little to improve classroom teaching. Some of the teachers suggested a program of peer evaluation or collegial supervision as a means of encouraging teachers to look more deeply into their own effectiveness. Others spoke of "ridding the system of incompetent teachers" by instituting a revised tenure policy whereby teachers would have their tenured status reviewed periodically, perhaps every five years.

When asked, "How effective are you as a teacher? For what reason?", the majority viewed their abilities very positively; however, they were hard pressed to offer a rationale for the rating of their personal effectiveness. There was a marked lack of specificity in identifying what in their teaching performance is good, and what needs improvement.

The overriding impression gained from the interviews is that teachers are demoralized, have lost confidence in the administration as well as their own teacher organizations, believe that they have little influence in their own situation, and generally feel pessimistic about the career of teaching.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. In this study, in both questionnaire and interview data, class size was seen as a major problem facing teachers.

2. While salary was important to teachers, especially the male teachers, it was not rated as the number one priority for additional spending.

3. Approximately two-thirds plan to remain in the teaching profession, with nearly half of the teachers wanting to continue as classroom teachers.

4. The majority of the respondents were basically satisfied with their career as classroom teachers; however, the pervasive feeling of discontent and depression among the teachers seemed to be chipping away at the rewards of teaching.

5. The elementary school teachers tended to be more satisfied with their careers than were teachers at the secondary level.

6. The vast majority of the respondents described their job as anything other than routine; teaching, they said, requires them to be creative in their work with students.

7. The teachers who selected their career for altruistic reasons more often said they plan to remain in teaching than did those who selected teaching because of interest in a particular subject area.

8. These teachers expressed grave concern about the future of public schooling. They are eager to work for a more positive situation, but feel helpless to have any impact. They feel that as individual teachers they are seldom consulted; more often they are attacked on all fronts--by the media, parents, students, and administration.

9. The teachers' views of problems today largely reflect the traditional problems of years past, such as class size, materials, remedial

instruction, disrespectful students, and non-supportive parents and administrators.

10. The respondents seemed to be of one accord about perceived "needs"--for greater job security, more support from the administration, more sharing of materials among colleagues, greater recognition of outstanding teachers, and greater commitment by faculty to the school.

11. Nearly a quarter of the teachers felt that they are doing an outstanding job; more than half felt that they are very good at their job. However, they were hard pressed to offer a rationale for this self-rating of their personal effectiveness.

12. The two areas in which additional training would be most important to these teachers are (a) student motivation, and (b) teaching techniques and strategies.

13. The vast majority of the respondents felt that their success as a teacher depends on external assistance--such as greater support from administrators, additional materials, and teacher aides--rather than on themselves. A negligible number of the teachers reported introspective consideration of their personal style of teaching.

14. Age and years of experience as a teacher related to feelings of job security: the more experience, the greater the amount of job security.

15. Teachers in the elementary schools tended to feel more positive about their administrators than did secondary teachers.

16. The younger teachers were more likely to report that teachers do not make an effort to share materials or general classroom expertise.

17. The perceived condition of the school building was related to teacher attitudes toward the administration: when the building was considered well kept, the administration was viewed in a positive, supportive manner.

18. Parents of low-ability students were regarded less positively than were parents of high-ability students, in terms of parental support, assistance with homework and school projects, and general home conditions conducive to learning.

19. The majority of teachers supported the requirement of additional course work to maintain certification.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The respondents in this study reported their perceptions of the major problems facing them as classroom teachers. The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study and rest on the firm belief that, despite the present distressing times, a purposeful program for alleviating the perceived problems has bright prospects. As Norman Cousins (1978) said, "Humanity's greatest problem has been the absence of belief in answers." There are answers. The crucial step toward the realization of answers is believing that "what is necessary is possible."

1. There should be a clearly defined reward system for teachers.

The research results showed that most of the teachers plan to stay in the teaching profession but, as revealed during the interviews, they foresee only a dismal future in teaching. The researchers believe a great deal of the pessimism is related to the nature of the teaching profession. Teaching is unique among the professions in that it offers little opportunity for upward movement. Lortie (1975) said most professions offer an opportunity to advance in both status and income without endangering occupational identity, but that for teachers the potential upward steps are few and typically resemble a "gentle incline rather than a steep ascent." The similarity of status for the untenured and the tenured teacher is evidence of this situation, which subtly depreciates the overall status of the teaching profession.

Each position in the education profession is essential, with none more important than another. Therefore, status and income of the classroom teacher and the administrator should be similar, providing each is effective and productive in the position held. Thus a highly proficient teacher might earn more than a less efficient administrator. The researchers believe such recognition would produce major changes in attitudes and teaching effectiveness.

2. There should be a program for teachers that offers opportunities for self-analysis as well as peer analysis of teaching performance.

Most of the teachers opposed the idea of a teacher competency test; they said such a test would do little to

produce better classroom teaching. When asked if they believe a program of peer consultation would be more effective than a competency test, they indicated that they did not understand what was meant by peer consultation. When the term was defined, teachers in most instances favored such a program.

The researchers believe that teachers would support a program of self- and peer analysis. A collegial program of clinical supervision (Goldhammer, 1969) would promote individual introspection, careful analysis of teaching performance, and professional relations with colleagues. Interaction rather than unilateral action is at the heart of "clinical supervision." Through interaction with a trained colleague (or department head or administrator) the teacher is helped to analyze personal teaching performance systematically. The steps in the model include:

a. Preobservation conference--discussion of lesson plan and establishment of observation "contract"

b. Observation--supervisor carefully observes, takes notes of everything that happens during the lesson, perhaps using video tape

c. Analysis and strategy--teacher and supervisor separately examine the observational data and make plans for the coming conference

d. Conference--teacher and supervisor together explore all facets of the teacher's performance.

This program calls for the training of a number of teachers in each school; they then would serve initially as in-class supervisors for their colleagues. In this way the classroom teacher would see the supervisor as a welcomed and needed source of help.

All teachers, not just beginning teachers, could profit from the closer analysis of what happens in a classroom as a result of their teaching performance. Growth as professionals is a lifelong process.

3. Teachers need a feeling of importance.

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that teachers are eager to work for a more positive situation, but that they feel helpless to have an impact in such a large school

system. Therefore, we recommend that administrators show evidence of increased awareness of teachers' distress and pessimism.

Teachers are people. And as people, they need what all human beings need: someone to recognize their worth; someone to let them know how they rate among their colleagues; someone to offer the kinds of challenges that encourage professional growth.

4. A thorough study should be made of the relationship between class size and learning.

If the express concerns of teachers are recognized, attention to class size is a high priority item on the education agenda. Administrators often make the point that research studies indicate class size has little or no effect on learning outcomes. Recently, however, studies (see Cahen and Filby, 1979) have indicated that when class size is small (25 students or fewer): (a) teachers use a greater variety of educational materials, methods, and activities; (b) the emotional climate of the classroom is more open and positive; (c) there are fewer behavior problems; and (d) students are more eager to participate in learning activities. If these conditions prevail, the primary benefit of small class size is greater academic achievement. When students can verbally participate in class and the teacher talks less, builds on the students' ideas, and uses less criticism, the result is more independent learners who experience self-direction and understanding on their way to mastery of the subject material (Flanders, 1965).

The issue of class size has been around for years. This study once again stresses the urgency of the problem. One of two steps is necessary: either reduce class size, or provide training which will help teachers understand that a change in their teaching methodology can adequately meet the problem of the larger class.

5. The cooperation between the public schools and colleges and universities must be strengthened.

Survey data showed that the teachers believe additional college work should be required to maintain certification. However, throughout the interviews, many teachers expressed concern that college work often is not what they really need for the improvement of classroom teaching.

Albert Shanker addressed the issue of the college/ profession relationship:

> The people who are proposing the dismantling of higher education, to a large extent, are no friends of teachers. . . . The motivation of critics is really to open up almost any field to anybody and to deny there is any body of knowledge, training, or expertise needed. I don't think it will take too long for teachers to understand that whatever their problems were with their education, if they join in this chorus of criticism, they are hurting themselves, their own position, and the entire institution. They are aligning themselves with those who really want to create a downgrading in this entire field. . . . If they went to an institution where they didn't learn anything, and it didn't make any difference, why should they be teaching instead of somebody out on the street who never went to school at all? (1977, p. 9).

Both teachers and higher education personnel are obligated to sit down together and regard the creative solution of problems as a joint effort. It is this concentration on relationships which will produce new solutions rather than more criticism.

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